

ABSTRACT: Sustainable Wines at wine- and liquorchain Gall & Gall

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As part of the AHOLD's responsible retailing strategy and because of an increased demand from customers, Gall & Gall wants to explain and offer wines to its customers that are 'responsible' or 'sustainable' alternatives. The problem is that it is not clear for Gall & Gall which wines fall under the category of 'sustainable' or 'responsible' wines. The research in this paper is therefore focused on what can be considered as sustainable for Gall & Gall and to get an overview of all the sustainable initiatives of Gall & Gall's wine suppliers.

It is clear that because of local circumstances, the risks for the environment differ for each country and region. There is not one international 'ecolabel' yet and the definitions for sustainability are very broad. As Gall & Gall is part of the AHOLD company, AHOLD's strategy and vision of sustainability should be taken into account. AHOLD indicates sustainability in six steps (also called 'pillars') concerning:

- Land use, avoiding exhaustion of soil
- Reduction of water use
- Waste management
- Improving biodiversity
- Energy efficiency or reduction of CO₂ emission
- Packaging

In a survey, 103 Gall & Gall wine suppliers were asked to indicate what sustainable initiatives they have been taking in reference to these pillars.

The survey showed that a division can be made in three categories:

- Certified companies with certification for organic or biodynamic wines
- Companies that are affiliated to a national or regional sustainability initiative that is certified by an independent accredited audit.
- Companies that have taken individual sustainable steps at one or more pillars that are not certified

As a recommendation Gall & Gall might consider to create a 'sustainable' stamp for organic and biodynamic wines. This sustainable stamp could also apply to wine suppliers affiliated to certified national and regional sustainable initiatives as Terra Vitis, Integrated Production of Wine (South Africa), Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand and others. The certifications can show the customer that the practices are in line with the claims.

The third category of the companies that have taken sustainable steps is the most difficult to explain to the customers. Mainly because it seems almost impossible to match these sustainable steps with objective criteria. The answers given in the questionnaires are often not specific enough to be able to judge the sustainable step. Sometimes sustainable steps might

seem 'green washing'; indicating a step as sustainable, which can be doubtful. To avoid ambiguity, a solution would be to ask the wine suppliers that are not certified to implement official methodologies for measuring carbon footprint, environmental management and water footprint.

When the carbon footprint, environmental management and water footprint are measured, Gall & Gall might consider creating a system of 'stamps' with different colours for companies that contribute to one or more pillars of AHOLD's sustainable steps and which are truly measured by official methodologies. This will give the customer a clear indication of the stage a company is in towards making sustainable wines.